

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Actor at Rest: Stillness as an Event of Attention

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Abstract

Taking pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness as its evidence, *The Actor at Rest* compares public-domain dramatic texts used to compare pauses, withheld movement, tableau, and delayed response. The corpus consists of *The Cherry Orchard*, *Three Sisters*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Intruder*. A performance-oriented comparison treats each pause as a staging experiment defined by preparation, ensemble relation, and aftermath, not as a fixed symbol. The central problem is how theatrical stillness reorganizes attention across space and time. The readings establish that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern; the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain; and the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing. This object-led approach treats framing, sequence, and access as historical decisions, not neutral containers, and identifies where further archival or production evidence would be needed. Together, these categories distinguish visible stillness from its changing dramatic function.

Keywords: acting; stillness; attention; pause; theatre

1 Introduction

This article asks how theatrical stillness functions as an event rather than as the absence of performance. It compares public-domain dramatic texts through performance-oriented textual and phenomenological analysis framed as reproducible staging experiments. The central claim is that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern. By tracing pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness, the study contributes a temporal account that distinguishes expressive restraint from inactivity.

The project's scope is more limited than a general history of eventful stillness. Within these works, theatrical stillness is assessed through pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness. Its definition changes only when those features alter the interpretation.

Three results give the discussion its structure. First, stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern. Second, the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain. Third, the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing. In com-

bination, they demonstrate that eventful stillness is neither a decorative effect nor a label attached after interpretation. The argument remains proportionate to the selection.

Stillness is analyzed as an embodied spatial relation rather than the absence of acting. Garner's phenomenology of theatrical space connects the actor's body with the spectator's changing field of perception [1]. Zarrilli's account of psychophysical acting clarifies how reduced external movement can remain an active organization of attention [2].

2 Stillness as a Staging Experiment

The central difficulty for *The Actor at Rest* is inferential distance. Pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness are observable in the consulted sources, whereas the account of theatrical stillness interprets how those observations connect. The article closes that distance in stages: it identifies a feature, locates its structural neighbors, describes the change it produces, and only then names its historical or aesthetic effect. A claim fails when any link in that chain depends on information absent from the cited edition, score, image, film, interface, or performance document.

Terminological precision is necessary

for *The Actor at Rest*. Theatrical stillness is distinguished from recurrence, theme, and context. Recurrence identifies repetition; theme identifies a field of concern; context situates the work historically. The present argument instead asks how pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness acquire a role through their connection to neighboring events. The distinction does not rank one form of criticism above another. It specifies the task of this article and prevents evidence gathered for one question from being used as automatic proof of another.

The evidentiary set consists of public-domain translations of *The Cherry Orchard* [3], *Three Sisters* [4], *Hedda Gabler* [5], and *The Intruder* [6]. Cases were chosen for conceptual contrast, not statistical representation. Each item offers a distinct configuration of eventful stillness and permits comparison through the common unit of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness.

The method is performance-oriented textual and phenomenological analysis framed as reproducible staging experiments. Bordwell's emphasis on sequential narration informs the before-and-after test for each pause [7]. Schechner's performance studies supports treating the

script as a prompt for alternative embodied realizations [8]. Rancière's account of spectatorship guides the analysis of how stillness redistributes attention within an ensemble [9].

The comparison begins where theatrical stillness becomes traceable—in pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness. The protocol records position, recurrence, interruption, and result before assigning interpretive weight. Gombrich's account of perceptual expectation informs the distinction between inactivity and an interruption made legible by prior motion [10]. Baxandall's model of historical explanation guides the separation of staging hypotheses from claims about intention [11]. Claims about reception, prevalence, or causal effect are withheld unless the cited sources supply that evidence.

The evidentiary chain for *The Actor at Rest* runs from source identification to description and only then to interpretation. A page, measure, frame, accession record, or production document is not decorative citation detail; it lets another reader locate the event on which the claim about theatrical stillness depends. Missing locators therefore mark a limit in the current draft. They should be resolved against the exact versions actually consulted, never supplied by approximation.

3 Stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern

The opening analytical pattern can be stated directly: stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern. This temporal dimension is essential. The finding therefore concerns organization, not inventory.

Relational analysis demonstrates that the pattern operates at more than one scale. The resulting form is recursive. Interpretation advances, but it also returns to revise what seemed settled. This recursive quality explains why eventful stillness can remain coherent without becoming predictable.

The Actor at Rest treats the claim that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern as an account of structural pressure. The question is not simply where pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness can be found, but how neighboring events make them expectable, delayed, displaced, or newly prominent. The proposition gains force

when a local change reorganizes the reader's, listener's, or viewer's grasp of the larger work. If no such outcome can be described, the evidence remains an inventory item rather than an argument about theatrical stillness.

4 The surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain

The visual and performance reading further finds that the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain. This pattern shifts analysis from isolated form toward distribution. The selection repeatedly makes such allocation perceptible.

Distribution gives the second result its precision. The claim that the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain depends on more than a contrast between dominant and subordinate positions. It depends on evidence that the contrast changes what can be known, heard, seen, said, or answered. In *The Actor at Rest*, pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness make that change traceable. A transfer carries weight when it reallocates initiative or credibility; otherwise it remains a surface variation. This threshold protects the argument about theatrical stillness from turning every difference into hierarchy.

The opening reference point comes from Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. The reading tests the proposition that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern by restricting attention to pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness. It then identifies which surrounding relations are necessary for that account.

In Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, the proposition that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern is evaluated through placement, not keyword recurrence. The reading asks what prepares each occurrence of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial connection, and the event that ends stillness, which agent or structural layer controls it, and what effect follows. A detail counts as evidence only when its surrounding sequence changes the available judgment. This restriction prevents the case from being reduced to an example chosen after the thesis was formed.

A close reading of Anton Chekhov's

The Cherry Orchard must therefore document the first relevant occurrence of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness, the expectation active at that moment, and the result that distinguishes it from background recurrence. The case supports *The Actor at Rest* only if those three points can be located in the consulted version. A general resemblance to the other cases is not enough; the passage must show why the proposition about theatrical stillness is needed to explain its organization.

A second comparison, Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, tests the distributive dimension of the argument. Here the governing question is whether the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain. This is not treated as a defect in reliability.

Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* changes the scale of comparison. Here theatrical stillness is read through the distribution of access, emphasis, and response among works and documents. The relevant question is not whether the same surface feature returns, but whether its return gives a different participant, voice, register, or position the capacity to redirect interpretation. That distributive test supplies the pressure behind the claim that the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain.

For Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, the principal counter-reading treats the observed distribution as a genre convention with no special bearing on theatrical stillness. The article answers only at the level of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial interaction, and the event that ends stillness: it asks whether a transfer of access or emphasis produces a later effect that convention alone leaves unexplained. If it does not, the second proposition narrows. If it does, the case clarifies how organizational hierarchy becomes an event rather than a static arrangement.

The third case turns to Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and gives priority to revision over initial recognition. The interpretive test is whether the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing.

The value of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* is retrospective. Following passages are reread against the first account of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness, allowing the article to distinguish repetition from revision. If the following event merely

restates the earlier one, the proposition that the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing receives little support. If it changes the status of what the reader, listener, or viewer already encountered, the case makes visible how theatrical stillness acquires formal memory.

Verification in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* requires two locators: one for the initial treatment of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness and one for the moment that alters its status. The interval between them is analytically important because it determines what can be remembered, expected, or misrecognized. Recording both locations prevents the following reading from being projected backward as if it had been available from the start, and it gives the claim about theatrical stillness a visible temporal basis.

The selection's final item, Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Intruder*, functions as a resistant comparison.

Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Intruder* remains in the selection because it resists easy synthesis. Its treatment of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness tests how far the claim that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern can travel before medium, genre, or historical circumstance demands qualification. The comparison does not convert resistance into confirmation. It records which part of the proposition persists, which part narrows, and which other source would be required to adjudicate between rival readings.

The resistant role of Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Intruder* also limits the article's vocabulary. If medium or genre changes the operation of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness, the comparison names that difference before proposing an analogy. The case may therefore support only part of the claim that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern. Such partial support is informative: it identifies the condition under which theatrical stillness ceases to explain the evidence and marks the point where another historical or formal account should take over.

5 The end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing

A third pattern suggests that the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing. Return, correction, re-framing, and delayed outcome are therefore analytical events. They reveal how a work stores difference and activates it later.

In combination, these results form a sequence of their own. The first identifies a process that directs attention. The second reveals that attention and authority are distributed. The third explains how subsequent events revise that distribution. This sequence supports the central thesis that eventful stillness is historically variable and formally organized.

The test for the third claim is counterfactual: if the following event were removed, would the prior reading of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness remain unchanged? A negative answer supports the proposition that the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing; a positive answer weakens it. *The Actor at Rest* uses this test to distinguish memory built by form from similarity noticed by the critic. The distinction matters for theatrical stillness, because retrospective force belongs to the organized sequence and not simply to the reader's ability to place examples side by side.

6 Discussion

Read as a sequence, the results move from form to allocation and then to revision. The first establishes that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern; the second, that the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain; the third, that the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing. This order prevents theatrical stillness from becoming a label applied after interpretation. It names a chain of decisions whose consequences can be checked against the images, scripts, films, and production records.

The comparison also suggests that acting analysis needs temporal relations that distinguish expressive restraint from inactivity. This effect does not depend on universal agreement about every example.

The argument is deliberately vulnerable to revision. If stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established

movement pattern appears only after examples are removed from sequence, the first claim weakens. If the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain cannot be tied to a visible allocation of access, emphasis, or agency, the second becomes thematic summary. If the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing depends on knowledge unavailable at the relevant moment, the third becomes retrospective overreach. These failure conditions define what would count against *The Actor at Rest*, not only what appears to support it.

The article contributes a distinction between appearance, function, and result. Appearance concerns what can be described in pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial relation, and the event that ends stillness; function concerns the connection established by its placement; result concerns the judgment made possible afterward. *The Actor at Rest* uses this distinction to prevent theatrical stillness from collapsing into a synonym for theme, mood, or context. The three levels may converge, but the argument does not assume that they do so in every work.

The procedure also separates comparison from equivalence. Cases are comparable because each poses a problem involving theatrical stillness, not because their historical conditions or formal resources are interchangeable. *The Actor at Rest* preserves those differences by defining the shared question at the level of function and the answers at the level of pause location, preceding action, gaze, bodily orientation, spatial link, and the event that ends stillness. This arrangement permits synthesis without claiming that one vocabulary exhausts the work of every text, score, image, film, or performance.

7 Conclusion

The visual and performance reading was organized around the question of how theatrical stillness functions as an event rather than as the absence of performance. Through performance-oriented textual and phenomenological analysis framed as reproducible staging experiments, it argued that stillness intensifies attention when it interrupts an established movement pattern; that the surrounding ensemble determines whether rest appears powerful, excluded, or uncertain; and that the end of stillness retrospectively defines what the pause was doing. These claims converge on a relational account of eventful stillness.

The comparison indicates that acting

analysis needs temporal relations that distinguish expressive restraint from inactivity. Because the study tests scripts through staging hypotheses, performer intention and audience response remain unresolved; rehearsal records, promptbooks, and recorded productions offer the next comparative step.

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